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AND THE SPIRITUAL IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE, AND THEIR  
PRESENT MUTUAL RELATIONS.

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# A SERMON

PREACHED IN

STATE STREET CHURCH, PORTLAND,

NOVEMBER 24, 1859,

—  
BY

REV. GEO. LEON WALKER,  
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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REV. GEO. L. WALKER,—

*Dear Sir:*—The undersigned, members of State Street Church and Society, having had the pleasure of hearing your sermon on Thanksgiving day, are desirous that those who did not hear it may have the privilege of reading it.

We therefore respectfully request a copy of it for publication.

WM. OXNARD,	R. CRAM,
WOODBURY DAVIS,	D. W. CLARK,
THOS. R. HAYES,	GEO. WARREN,
H. J. LIBBY,	CHAS. E. BECKETT,
WARREN SPARROW,	ISRAEL T. DANA,
H. M. PAYSON,	F. OXNARD.

*Portland, Dec. 1st, 1859.*

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MESSRS. W. OXNARD, WOODEBURY DAVIS, AND OTHERS,

*Gentlemen:*—The sermon, of which you have requested a copy, was written with the design of enforcing certain principles which seem to me of general application, as well as of fundamental importance in our public concerns. Endeavoring to unfold these in the light of truth, the subject was treated in behalf of no special interest of whatever name.

Its publication is now assented to, in the hope to subserve the welfare of a truthfulness more local and temporary.

Desirous, with you, to honor both the lesser and the greater cause, I submit it without change of a syllable; and am

Respectfully yours,

GEO. LEON WALKER.

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## S E R M O N.

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GENESIS 11: 7.

AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND, AND  
BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN  
BECAME A LIVING SOUL.

WE do not admire the spirit of that half-sighted scientific pretension which delights to say in the language of a recently deceased physiologist — that it can “reduce all it knows about man to a gas.”

Still, it does not trouble our faith in the least, that under the manipulations of science this stately frame collapses upon itself, retreating ever into simpler elements, till at last the eloquent orator, the subtle philosopher, the impassioned poet, resolved to a few crystals, lies at the bottom of a crucible, and under the application of a little heat, visibly vanishes into invisible air. We can watch this process with the utmost composure, astonished only at the sciolism which can pride itself upon such a procedure as at all an exhausted analysis of man’s nature ; and come back with new delight, to the vastly more accurate (simply because more comprehensive statement) of the elements of that nature given in inspiration: “And the

Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,"—a truth which chemistry is abundantly able to prove—"and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,"—a fact evident in a thousand ways, but not to be detected by any crucial tests or solvents of the laboratory. This simple statement of the origin of man, contains in itself the very epitome of all wisdom respecting the nature, the needs, the capabilities and aspirations of the being whose origin it records. It indicates at once the earthly and the divine in man. It shows him related on the one side to the inanimate clay, on the other to the all-conscious spirit. Not a rock or vapor but may claim brotherhood with him, not a reach of the Divine infinity but owns him kin. With the instinct of common lineage all his flesh and his bones yearn toward the maternal dust: with the spontaneous impulse of consanguinity, his spirit reaches upward unto God. He is that being whom a breath of air may destroy: he is he who will survive, unscathed, the smelting of worlds. His days count not up even the youth time of an oak: his years cannot be numbered by the ocean's sands. The summer melts him as it does his kindred wax, the winter hardens him as his brother ice,—*no* material agencies can touch him, and he would pass unbreathed upon, through the chaos of creation. His wants go prone upon the earth, and lick up its dust like a serpent: he wants *nothing* which has only a begun existence, but can be content only with uncreated and infinite being.

His passions shame the very beasts who through them might recognize in him a brother more debased : there is a region, and he knows the way thither, of abstract and passionless truth, and throned in *that*, his spirit sometimes sits crowned like a god.

Now in all wise words respecting man, this double nature must be taken into view. That is not wisdom which looks at him either as pure spirit, or as matter devoid of inspiration. Legislation must recognize both poles of his being — it must trammel him about as one who can be kept in the pinfold of physical constraint ; not forgetting, at the same time, that he is a being whom no human laws can fully control, and that he dwells in a region where no locks and bars avail.

Philanthropy in its efforts for man must meet him in both departments of his being : Is it a starving man who solicits her kindness ? then give bread, but remember man cannot live by bread alone. Is it freedom which is craved at her hand ? — strike off then the fetters from the limbs, but remember that it is only when the Son makes free that he is free indeed. Is it elevation, happiness, prosperity, Philanthropy would give a man ? — well, endue him with health, give him riches, enlarge his thoughts, — but he may yet be sick, and poor, and ignorant, unless the gift be large enough for his whole being.

This is plain enough to most men in looking at individuals. The truth is trite that man is essentially two beings, and that his nature leads him in opposite direc-

tions. He has moral and immoral tendencies within him. He is at once intellectual and material. His happiness lies at once in sense and spirit. There is a good for him which is of the earth, earthy. There is a good equally necessary which is above earth or time.

He seems almost a being rent in twain by this schism in his nature. The earth in him cries out for earth, the spirit yearns toward spirit.

Plato's white and black horses drawing against one another, well typify the antagonism between his passions and his nobler instincts.

Now if the question be asked what is the good in which this being can rest ; what is the good which will satisfy and content him ? — the reply is obvious (and it is as old as all speculations on the being of man), it must be something which will meet the wants of his entire nature. It lies not in the one or the other pole of his being only. His highest good can be attained only by such a course as will satisfy both the higher and the lower nature that unite in him.

But this answer has always been a temporary one. The old schism in the nature has asserted itself, and one part of that nature has craved one thing, and the other its opposite. What is to be done ? The wise reply in all ages has been, "The Highest must rule." The nobler part of man's being must give the law to the less noble. Not striving to extirpate its fellow, it must sway and absolutely control it.

The spirit must say to the body, not, "I have no need of thee;" but "thou art my handmaid." Not a slave, destitute of rights, but a servant to be employed in ends involving the welfare both of servant and master. An instrument wielded with careful reference both to it, and to the hand that uses it. No capricious and tyrannical sovereignty is it which man's higher nature is to have over his lower, but a calm and firm control based upon a wise apprehension of what will make for the welfare of the entire being, under the still higher sway of a Law, be it morality or faith, which is supreme over both.

So that when we wish to know of any given individual whether he is complete in his welfare, we do not (if we are wise enough to take more than a half-sighted view of him), we do not ask merely "Is he well? Has he riches and is he complete in the material elements of happiness?" but we inquire further, "How does he employ these things? Has he the rule over them? Does he use them under the control of noble motives to noble ends?"

Not till we know this, can we tell how fully the man is accomplishing the end of his being. Not till we see what proportion the spiritual in the man bears to the material, can we pronounce upon the dignity and happiness of the life he is living, the nobility or the ignominiousness of the character he is fashioning to himself.

I have drawn out these considerations (albeit somewhat obvious in their nature) at considerable length, because I think they will help us to meet the obligations laid upon

us to-day. We are summoned to consider our occasions for Thankfulness as individuals and as a people.

To understand clearly, however, our cause for rejoicing, we must know somewhat distinctly the position in which we stand, as to our fulfillment or non-fulfillment of those great conditions upon which our welfare, and of course our occasion for rejoicing, depends. And as in accordance with custom and the proprieties of the day, our consideration turns chiefly toward our occasions for rejoicing, as a People, as a component part of society and the Nation; to know rightly what grounds we have for the sentiment we are called upon to exercise, we must inquire how far, as a people, we are fulfilling the great ends with which our highest welfare is connected.

And, in introducing the inquiry, it seemed expedient to begin by directing attention to the conditions with which the happiness and well being of the individual member of society, considered in his solitary capacity, are inseparably bound. And this for two reasons:—1st, in accordance with that wise saying of Aristotle's, “That the nature of every thing is best seen in its smallest portions.” Which implies that he who would consider the welfare of a nation must study it, partially in the lesser relations and smaller portions of individual welfare. But 2dly, and chiefly, because the materials and conditions of the individual well being, are set as a type of like conditions and materials in the wider existence of a nation. Understanding the one, we have a key to the other.

The arrangement and the law which prevails in the one, will be likely to be that which bears sway in the other. Says the wise son of Sirach:—“ All things are double one against another; and one thing establisheth the good of another.” This is after the usual mode of the Divine working. He does a thousand things by the working of one or two simple laws. For instance, the law by which an acorn falls is the same law which holds the moon to her changeless courses round the world: and the same pervasive gravitating force which holds the countless systems of the stellar universe in their place, bends, and only bends, the drooping hare-bell trembling by the brook.

Just so the being of man becomes typical of the being of society. Just so if we find in *him* a radical and permanent characteristic, we may look for its correlate in the nation. If there be any law indispensable to his welfare, the like law is an imperative condition of the public good. If any original and universal infirmity or schism exists in his nature, we may undoubtfully anticipate its equivalent in the nature of the corporate existence of a nationality.

I shall venture therefore a remark or two (made the more brief by what has already been said of the elements and laws of individual well being) upon National welfare in general, independently of any special reference to our own nation. We shall then be prepared to apply any tests which we may have discovered, to our own condition and the present time.

(a) And I observe that a two-fold condition, perfectly an-

alogous to that condition of man which is implied in our text, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," is characteristic also of National existence. It has its material and its spiritual side. It has its relations which are of the earth, which find their end in physical well being; which in their noblest development smell of the mold in which they originate:— and it has also its relations which take hold on spiritual truth, which draw their inspiration from realms of pure thought, and breathe the diviner air of nobility and justice and humanity. On the one side are all its resources of physical power; on the other its principles of moral rectitude and intellectual cultivation. Of the earth, earthy are all its million acres of teeming soil and their countless produce which swell the granaries and storehouses of an empire, and incline in her favor the balance of a world-wide commerce. Of the earth, earthy are the factories of a thousand water-courses and all the cunning enginery they contain, and the delicate fabrics they send forth.

From the earth and to the earth again, are the miles on miles of towering city walls; the wharves that hem about an ocean; the steamboats and sails that make the pathless deep a trodden highway. All that can be reckoned in coins, bear they the stamp of Cæsar or Victoria; all that is shifted from zone to zone by commerce, all that science extorts from the hidden vaults of nature, all that art fashions with dextrous fingers, outwitting nature for

gold, is, however beautiful, however necessary, of the earth only, and answers to that in man of which it was said, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return."

Almost all that goes into the account of political economies, and is reckoned up in the tables of national prosperity, bears this ineffaceable mark of its relative worth, "The Lord God formed it of the dust of the ground."

(b) Do we look now for that which is the Divine in-breathing; that which vivifies all this else rank and corrupting mass, and makes it to have a living soul? We find it in the principles of the nation. Its Laws express it upon the side of justice: its Religion unfolds it upon the side of devotion: its Education manifests it in the direction of intellect: its Manners declare it in the type of its refinement.

These are not matters which can be reckoned by figures. They have not relation to space or time. They come from nobler spheres than regions visited by commerce, or territories under alien skies. All that it has of these things, cometh down from the Father of lights.

If now we inquire in which consists the good of a nation: what is its glory? the answer comes as before when we asked what was the good for a man. Not merely the vastness of its physical resources; the wealth of its material endowments or the imposing greatness of its corporal power. Nor on the other hand are these to be ignored, and the inquiry be directed only to the prevalencee

in it of morality and justice, of nobility and freedom, of intelligence and honor.

The investigation must take into account both poles of national being. Its Good can be nothing less than the good which satisfies both parts of its nature. Its value and the honor due to it must be estimated by a view of it both as “formed from the dust of the ground,” and as breathed into a “living soul.”

And the standard of judgment here, can be nowise different in principle, from that which determines our estimate of the honor and well being of a man. How does the nation employ its material and sensuous resources ? are they under the control of the higher motives of righteousness, and equity, and intelligence, or are they made an end in themselves, and sought at the sacrifice of truth and honor and freedom ? Not till we know how a nation uses its powers : not till we see what are the motive ideas which control and guide all the ongoings of its strength, can we determine its rank in the scale of honor, its title to a place in hearts which rejoice over God’s best gifts to men. It may have all the material endowments of the vast empire of Persia ; yet shall the moral courage and noble devotion of one Sparta, abide longer in the memories of men, and be more potent in molding the welfare of mankind.

In the fulness of its physical appliances it may become (in the absence of justice and morality) like behemoth among the beasts, huge, dreaded, devouring ; strong only

in the rudeness of physical strength, earthly, sensual, devilish. Or rightly subordinating its material capabilities to the service of that which is noblest and justest in national life, it may become among the peoples of the earth even as a god : a strength for righteousness going out through all the earth, with words of promise to the end of the world. And ultimately it is by this standard that every nation is tried. Ultimately the question is not, what were its powers ? but how were they employed ? Not, what was the reach of its empire ? but what the reach of those principles, the depth of that patriotism, the purity of that morality which express a nation's living soul ? Because tried by this test — the early growth of Greece and Rome was, relatively to contemporary nations, a growth in the ascendancy of ideas over matter, of principles over forces, History gives them an immortal place in her memory : Because tried by this test, the mighty empire of the Egyptian Ptolemies was an empire of the earthly ; an empire in which the brute in the nation triumphed over the spiritual, History has wiped out of her tablets almost the record of its existence, as the desert winds have swept that people's very dust out of their lying ancestral sepulchres.

Turning now to the application of these principles to the measurement of that national well-being for which we are summoned to be thankful to-day, we see that the present occasion will allow only a hasty use of them, in a very few particulars. The principles themselves I commend to your further and more leisurely reflection.

I. To employ, however, the brief time at our disposal: It requires but a cursory glance over our country, to discover that in that first element of its two-fold being — the greatness of its physical resources, it has been wonderfully endowed. Upon the favorite theme on which American eloquence is wont to plume its loftiest flight — the greatness of our national domain, I shall not enlarge. The fact is obvious (though indeed difficult to realize) to any one who will cast an eye over the map of a country, which needs a new representation of the outline of its civilization almost yearly. It *is* a wonderful domain in its territorial reach. Sparta had not the area of Delaware. Rome when it set out upon the conquest of the world had not the square miles of Maine.

But not more distinguished is our land for the greatness than for the character of its physical possessions. Here, too, I must avoid appropriating speech supposed to be sacred to our national anniversary. The fact, however, I take to be capable of truthful expression in sober prose, that no great nationality of the world possesses within the outline of her natural, I had almost said her necessary boundary, so many of the resources of a self-sufficient and bountifully provided nation as our own. Within the easy reach of the enlarging wants of a singularly hungry and eager people, lie more of the appliances suited to those necessities, than within the limits of any other civilized nation on earth. Nor can our people be charged with backwardness in the development of these

resources. It is indeed the miracle of modern ages, that a skill little less than creative, a science almost as weird as magic, have evoked from material nature within the past generation of human life more of her cherished secrets, and wrought her to more dextrous uses, and extorted from her more bounteous gifts, and made her the servant of a more manifold artistic and commercial activity, than any previous generation since the birth of time. It is perfectly proper to say, that it is not in the power of human faculties to hold up before the mind anything more than the vaguest idea of that multiform physical life which turns up annually the soil of more acres than the Empire of Great Britain contains: which gives employment to a commerce which reckons a tonnage greater than the whole world of seventy years ago: which delves within our own borders, in mines of every metal: which whirls into spray the tides of a thousand rivers: which groans along the burdened lines of innumerable miles of railroad: which flashes its mandates, too eager for Time itself, from inland to seaboard: which sweats and toils in ten thousand shops and factories, and cheats the night of its hours and the minute of its seconds, in every craft to which the subtle hand can turn — toiling, toiling forever, to supply the ever enlarging demands of the most restless, the most skillful, the most insatiate nation upon earth.

As the Lord God in forming men from the dust of the ground gives to one a stronger, more subtle and well en-

dowed physical frame than to another ; so it is simple truth to say, has he given to us more of the endowments, present and prospective, which appertain to the material life of a nation, than to any other having a place in the charts of our planet.

II. If we look now from this material side of our national life, to that other phase of its being which answers to the Inspiration of God in the human frame, we shall find it still more difficult to express or accurately to realize the value of certain principles which are cognate with our existence. In reference to this side of our national being have Americans far more reason for pride than for the other. For, as the moral worth of a man is a higher thing than the perfection of his health or the abundance of his material possessions,—so the ideas which in our origin became consolidated into principles of Government, are far nobler matters, than physical greatness, however superb. And in these things was our very infancy singularly endowed. The breath which quickened in our national frame a living soul, was more fresh from the Author of all, than that which infused the frames of most governments of men. For our nation (and this is no matter for pride, simply for thankfulness), for our nation started into being at an advanced stage of the development of spiritual and practical truth in this world. It had the benefit without undergoing the experience of all the ages past. It was free to take up into itself the ripened fruit of all previous effort of mankind, and to leave

untouched the imperfect or hurtful results of their painful and costly trials.

(a.) Certain of these spiritual legacies of the past which became organic principles of our national life are of inestimable value. Among these may be mentioned as one of the most potent, the principle of human Freedom. And I mention this as a peculiar witness to the heaven-derived origin of that inspiration, which breathed into a living soul the earthly frame of our national being. For this principle of equal rights is the pure offspring of Christianity. Let its pedigree be traced with the most rigid scrutiny. Politicians never conceived it. It had not a human origin. It came by no path which jurisprudence had marked out: its highway was not cast up by legislation. The oriental nations never attained the idea of human freedom. They knew only that one was free, the sovereign the tyrant. The Greeks went a little further. They knew that some were free — not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle did not dream this.

It was Christianity alone which gave birth to the mighty conception of universal equality among men. By recognizing the individual accountability of man to God ; by showing that in the pedigree of heaven an emperor reckons no higher than a slave ; by introducing a totally new standard of judgment of human worth, and above all by disclosing the equal redemption of all men by a love which was no respecter of persons, it gave expression,

and it alone, to this grandest doctrine of liberty ever promulgated, the equal and inalienable rights of every man of our race.

This principle it expressed in that grand formula of equal liberty, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on all the face of the whole earth." And this principle (with one glaring exception—an exception which withheld from their equal rights one considerable portion of our fellow-citizens) became the fundamental principle of our national being. This was the legend luminous upon its brow above all others, "All men are created equal, endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." I said, that with the exception of one class, this principle became the all embracing one of our national existence.

But it ought to be said, further, that even this class were not supposed to be permanent, but only temporary exceptions to the rule. History has but one voice upon this matter. It was the confident and the prevalent expectation of those most concerned in the establishment of our confederacy, that this class would not long remain under the bonds of that limitation which made their very existence an anomaly and a libel upon our free institutions. In this undoubting and undeniable expectation, the fathers labored to give the widest possible application to the principle of equal rights: and, in what they deemed clear vision of its speedy absolute prevalence, they fell

This, then, was one of the original endowments of the nobler side of our national life — *freedom for man as man*.

(b.) Another of these original principles which the Lord God breathed into the body of our national being, is the principle of liberal and pure moral and intellectual cultivation.

This, too, is one of the blessings which are the special boon of Christianity. It is the natural accompaniment of that conception of human responsibility and equal freedom which she revealed to men. Education had been known before, but not as the inheritance of the multitude. It was the privilege of the few, not the right of all. Especially was the moral element of education unknown as of utmost importance as also of indefeasable right to every man. The spectacle was new, therefore, of a nation putting into the forefront of her hopes and efforts, a virtuous intelligence built upon liberal culture and the morality of the Bible.

And perhaps, here as clearly as anywhere else, may American patriotism discern the trait which may best excuse a national pride. In the prevalence of information through all orders of social life : in the general intelligence and mental activity of our people : in the direction of this activity, to a very considerable extent, by principles of morality, we may discover, perhaps *the* title to national superiority which would be most cordially acknowledged by other nations of the world, and which could be most successfully defended before the high court of History.

It were easy to point out several other principles which had, with more or less distinctness, an original place in that spiritual endowment which constitutes the superior side of our national life. But it is time to ask ourselves that further question, which I showed to be indispensable to a correct judgment of individual or national character, “What relative place do these principles actually occupy? Are the superior of them gaining in their rightful supremacy? Are they employing the lower gifts of national resource, with a continually widening control, directing them ever to nobler ends? or on the other hand is that physical side of our national being swelling up against and giving the law to the spiritual?

This is the question which determines our title to self-congratulation to-day. It is not, what was the relative position of these earthly and spiritual powers fifty years ago; but what is it to-day? As when you would know the character of a man, you do not ask, “what was he when a child, but how is he now? Is his moral nature supreme over his lower appetites or is he their victim?” so in estimating our present national character, we can dwell in no pleasing retrospect, but must invoke present realities.

III. And when we thus ask ourselves, “What at the present time *is* the relation between our nation’s higher and lower life; what is the relative influence of her material and her spiritual endowments; and what is the tendency of things now?” The answer cannot be, I think,

altogether gratifying. To me, at least, it seems undeniable that our day is one of a rapidly increasing supremacy of the merely physical part of our welfare. More and more are the material resources of our land becoming the objects of absorbing national attention. More and more is the development of these, coming to be the object and the test of every effort of national power. To the enhancement of this merely earthly and sensual welfare, are the energies of government devoted with constantly increasing zeal. That which the Lord God formed of the dust of the ground, is rising yearly to become the great end for which a people lives, the one good for which it seeks. The aims on which legislation is turning ever a more settled and greedy eye, are the interests of Commerce, the interests of Agriculture, the interests of Manufactures. These things must be regarded, whatever else be forgotten. For these things must be thrown up a broad highway, whatever else must creep in a by-path. Whatever threatens these, must be visited with sudden retribution, whatever other wrong may go unwhipt of justice. Touching these things one touches the apple of the nation's eye. Threatening them calls out all the nation's wrath. A fire goeth before them and behind them a flame burneth.

Now it seems almost unnecessary to ask if such devotion to material prosperity be compatible with the due influence of higher principles leading to a nobler welfare. It cannot be.

As a man cannot live for the indulgence of his lower nature without injury to his higher sensibilities; so it is impossible that a nation should make its material welfare a predominant end, without deplorable damage to its higher principles of Equity, Truth, and Humanity.

And precisely this damage have we sustained. And just this damage is growing more and more upon us. For this cause is it increasingly the case that “Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the streets and equity cannot enter.” Fast are we advancing toward the time when our motto will be read, wide as was once the blazon of our “liberty and equal rights,” Trade before religion: Wealth before morality: Cotton before humanity.

. But I will not rest this matter in general statements only. I will adduce two undeniable and characteristic examples of the giving way of the nobler principles of national life before the insurgent upheaval of its lower and sensual appetites.

(a) And one of these is the patent and glaring change which has taken place in the sentiment of the public and the conduct of the government, in reference to that class of our fellow-citizens to whom I made reference before, as being, by a singular solecism, exempted from the privileges of a freedom which affected to embrace all men.

It cannot admit of question that this solecism was generally supposed merely temporary. It admits of proof that in the view of some of the framers of the govern-

ment, the time of its continuance was supposed to be nearly ended even in its beginning.

That was an era when the spiritual side of our nationality was in the ascendant. Then lived men who rightly understood wherein a nation's honor lay, and in what was the special glory of their own mighty work.

But they passed away, taken from the evil to come. They passed away before the inauguration of those changes which lent a new and feverish stimulus to the appliances of our nation's physical life. Changes that rapidly growing, gained a speedy ascendancy over the nobler principles of her earlier day. Art invented the cotton-gin, the spinning-jenny, and raised in European cities and along New-England water-courses, the wonders of a thousand factories. At once human souls doubled in value. Immortal spirits redeemed by the blood of Christ, became instantly (if encased in ebon or in tawny skins) the most profitable investment a Christian could make.

At the same time that the devil offered this great temptation to our land, he threw open in every direction the great avenues of material prosperity. Commerce unfurled a thousand sails. Trade upraised, as by enchantment, innumerable storehouses. On every side a sudden appeal was made to the lower, the earthly side of our nature. A vivid heat was kindled in every sensual passion of the national life, and the nation rushed, as a man maddened by drink, to the surfeit of its material appetite. What though, in its frenzied strides toward physical good,

it must belie the hopes and prayers and principles of its founders ? it must be done. What though the crimson tides of millions of those whom God made of one blood with us, must redden the way down which she rushes to the glut of appetite ? it matters little : honor and humanity always go down in the upheaval of the brute.

But will not Law, the incarnation of justice, interpose her awful sanctions on the side of right ? Will she not, bearing that glorious symbol of equity in the one hand, and that instrument of avenging righteousness in the other, stand up for God and humanity ? Alas, no ! She will strain to the uttermost hair the strict letter of the bond. She will fawn and crouch at the beck of passion, and trail the ermine of justice beneath the hoofs of trade. When God had a question with the Jews about redemption through his Son, the Doctors of the law were debating how many anise seeds would expiate theft. When God has a question of *humanity* at issue with us, our incarnation of Justice is straining points of grammar in the interest of tyranny.

But will not the Church interpose with a power not less potent though uninvested with emblems of authority ? Will not she utter the words God giveth her to speak, and lay righteousness to the line and truth to the plummet ? Nay, verily ! Rather will she deny the blood of her kindred ; withhold the truth from the dying soul, and prophesy falsehood in the congregation. Rather will she invent new arguments for oppression, and strain ancient

and incomprehensible prophecy to the ensnaring of souls ; then, wiping her lips, say like the woman in the Proverbs, “Surely I have done no iniquity.”

Under such leadership it is no wonder that the popular mind has gone eagerly in a course so consonant with that lower nature which so readily gains the ascendancy in a man or people. No marvel that parties rise or fall as they subserve, with greater or less readiness, the behests of a people who have elected, to so great a degree, material before spiritual good, trade before truth, money before humanity. Yet though the way be thronged by the devotees of that material greatness which is purchased at such a sacrifice, yet is it none the less true, that the ruling spirit of our age is one which belies that which gave all the nobility to our origin, and that our boasted civilization is one which battens on the blood and souls of men.

(b.) Intimately associated with that change in the public sentiment upon the subject of human slavery, which I have adduced as one illustration of the giving way of the nobler principles of our national life, before the upheaval of the lower appetites, is another, to which I can however only advert. And this is, the reckless and dishonorable conduct of our people and government regarding the matter of Territorial Extension. The greed of this extension arises from the same general cause, the preponderance of material appetite over those principles of honor and justice which are rightfully supreme. A lust of the earthly ; a passion for power ; a hankering for

widened commercial and agricultural resources, is the generic cause of this loss of moral sensibility, this enormous accretion of dishonor in our national affairs. And in this instance the shame is peculiarly rank. For the immediate motive is one which is wholly in the interest of that monstrous iniquity, which already heaps so high our public disgrace.

Once, already, has it plunged us into an expensive and totally inexcusable war with a neighboring nation. A war in its principle not one iota above the action by which one man robs another on the highway. A war whose expense was the very least of its evils. A war which did more to undermine the foundations of national morality, than any other single event which has ever happened. A war which brought over the ethical sentiment of our country, I must believe, a far more destructive blight than the French infidelity which came in with our Paines, our Jeffersons and our Aaron Burrs. A blight which fell upon the Church as well as upon society at large. Which numbed the moral sensibilities of all classes. So that now, we can look on with apathy or unconcern, if not with sinister exultation, at the outreachings of an ambition which can hardly keep violent hands from off the coveted Cuban prize; and which are for a moment withheld by no considerations of justice or honor, but only by fear, lest the act should bring down upon us from across the seas, the sudden retribution we instinctively feel it deserves.

IV. And now, having indicated a few of the evidences that in our national life the lower and material element has of late been gaining rapid and fearful ascendancy, and finding in this a cause only for shame, have we nothing to oppose to them ?

Amid this general hounding-on, by press and pulpit, by church and party, the rush of passion and greed of power, are we to be defrauded of our title to thankfulness in matters pertaining to Public welfare to-day ? Thank God we are not quite come to that ! But wherein lies our cause for congratulations and rejoicing ?

Not, in my humble view, not in any broad and indiscriminate thoughts of national Power. Can we forget as christians, as moralists, as men, to what uses much of that power is prostituted ? Not in loose conceptions of our national Wealth ! Can we forget from how much of that wealth the blood of our brother crieth unto the heavens ? Nay, not in any sense, in material prosperities irrespective of those spiritual uses which can alone elevate and redeem them. In themselves they are valueless. I do not know but the walls and arches of hell are built of gold.

But if we have cause, and God be praised that we have cause ! for rejoicing to-day, it *is* in the traces that here and there are seen of an awakening of the public conscience to the enormity of the public sins. It is in the signs which begin to appear that the divine, ancestral principles of our government are again to be remembered. It is in the tokens beheld in some parts of our land, that

we are not quite ready to sit down forever beneath the burden of a shame and a lie, which makes our boast of free institutions a stench in the nostrils of christendom. It is in the attitude of a portion of the American church, re-asserting the first principles of the Gospel of Christ, and refusing to deny the brotherhood of all men by the blood of redemption. It is in the shame that is beginning to kindle our cheeks, at the decay of integrity in all departments of public trust. It is in the indignation which rises within us, at startling disclosures of corruption in the loftiest station, and bribery and iniquity in high places.

It is not in Parties by whatsoever name they may be called; it is not in demagogues, Republican or Democratic. It is in the growing sentiment of sturdy hate of Wrong, which, under the power of gathering knowledge and the Spirit of God, is beginning to make itself felt as a force for righteousness in our land.

It is in every instance of fearless vindication of the right — assailed by wrong in whatever guise. It is in every spectacle of patient endurance of evil; in every heroic sacrifice for human freedom and God's law. It is in the prophet voices which begin to herald the return of Righteousness to the throne, and Equity to the scepter.

It is in that vivid, but all involuntary demonstration of the inherent *weakness*, as well as wickedness, of all systems of oppression, which is afforded in that spectacle of panic terror, now trembling all over the soil of Virginia —

“ Virginia once the mother of Presidents, now the breeder of slaves,” — and which offers a melancholy, were it not rather a ludicrous, commentary upon the scripture proverb, “ The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth : the sound of a shaken leaf chaseth them.”

It is in the witness borne even by that misguided and fool-hardy man, who will shortly testify by a death (for which however no reproach can be cast upon the authorities of law), how ineradicably and forever antagonistic to the human conscience, and to a soul nursed up under the grand old doctrines of sturdy Calvinism, is any system which deprives a man of the full rights of his being, in meeting those terrible issues of life, death and eternity, which this faith recognizes as the dower of every soul.

It will be, in that hasting day of Execution (which let no man pray that it be averted or delayed!) which will loosen from corporeal bands a mistaken but noble soul, that becoming thenceforth a spirit moving unconfined by space, a Power entering the imaginations and purposes of men, will sow our land with more of the seeds of liberty and humanity, than his life could have scattered, had his days been a hundred years, and his tongue the tongue of Otis or of Henry.

Above all, it is in that recent quickening of God’s spirit about the hearts of men, and the conscience of society, wherein we read the surest token that God has not deserted us as a people ; or suffered his design of bringing to completest maturity a Nation whose infancy was

cradled by Freedom and nursed by Religion, utterly to fail.

Here if anywhere ; in these things if in any things, abides our warrant for public rejoicing to-day.

In vain do we look in any other direction for an occasion of public congratulation that does not tingle the cheek with shame. But in these things we rejoice.

We do not believe the light of this nation is to go out in eclipse. We believe in the ultimate ascendancy of truth and freedom and humanity. We believe they have begun to retrieve their loss. We believe that under the favor of God, “some one may be heard” in every coming year, “offering in higher strains, in new and loftier measures, to sing and celebrate his divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land, throughout all ages : Whereby this people, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her old vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest and most Christian nation at that day,—when Thou, the eternal and shortly expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honors to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, and proclaim thy universal and mild monarchy throughout heaven and earth.”



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